

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 03907 100831Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 MCT-01  
IO-13 SAA-01 AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /085 W  
-----070918 101312Z /11

R 100711Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
USINT BAGHDAD  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
SECDEF  
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3907

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, SY  
SUBJ: LULL IN POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ASSASSINATIONS BUT ACTS OF  
ECONOMIC SABOTAGE CONTINUE

1. NO REPORTS OF ATTEMPTS TO ASSASSINATE ALAWITES OR OTHER  
PERSONS IDENTIFIED WITH THE ASSAD REGIME HAVE BEEN  
RECEIVED SINCE MAY 17. THIS LENDS CREDENCE TO  
REPORTS THAT SYRIAN INTELLIGENCE ORGANS HAVE FINALLY MADE  
SOME PROGRESS IN DETERMINING RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCH ACTS.  
OTHER LULLS HAVE OCCURRED BEFORE ACCOMPANIED BY SIMILAR  
OPTIMISTIC REPORTS ONLY TO BE PROVEN PREMATURE WITH THE  
DESPATCH OF ANOTHER PROMINENT ALAWITE.

2. HOWEVER, SEVERAL SPECTACULAR ACTS OF ARSON  
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 03907 100831Z

OCCURRED ON THE NIGHT OF JULY 5 WHEN TWO GOVERNMENT  
OWNED LUMBER YARDS OWNED BY INTERMETAL, A GOVERNMENT  
IMPORTER OF BUILDING MATERIALS WENT UP IN FLAMES IN  
DAMASCUS AND ITS ENVIRONS. IN ONE CASE FIRE BURNED  
FOR SEVEN HOURS BEFORE BEING BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL.  
WE HAVE RECEIVED NUMEROUS REPORTS THAT SIMILAR FIRES  
OCCURRED ON SAME NIGHT IN LUMBER YARDS OWNED BY INTERMETAL IN

SEVERAL OTHER SYRIAN CITIES ALTHOUGH THE REPORTS CONFLICT AS TO WHICH CITIES. SOME DISAGREEMENT EXISTS IN INTERPRETING THE REASONS FOR THESE ACTS OF ARSON. SOME RUMORS HAVE IT THAT COMPANY OFFICIALS MAY HAVE WISHED TO COVER UPGLARING SHORTAGES OF LUMBER WHICH FOUND THEIR WAY ONTO THE BALCK MARKET OR THAT PROFITEERS SET THEM, WHILE OTHERS SEE THEM AS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED.

3. WHILE NO FIGURES ARE AVAILBLE, ADMIN OFFICER HEARD FROM ONE SOURCE THAT APPROXIMATELY DAMAGE OF \$5 MILLION WERE INCURRED AT ONE DAMASCUS LUMBER YARD ALONE. LOSSES COULD LEAD TO SHORTAGES AND A PRICE RISE DRIVING UP THE COST OF SUCH THINGS AS LOCALLY MANUFACTURED FURNITURE.

4. WHATEVER THE MOTIVATION FOR INCIDENTS OF ARSON, A FAVORITE TARGET IN RECENT YEARS FOR ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITY, THE DAMASCUS FAIR, ISCOMING UP JULY 15. A PEACEFUL FAIR WOULD BE ANOTHER INDICATOR THAT SYRIA'S SECURITY FORCES HAVE THEIR FINGER ON THE PULSE OF VIOLENT ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITY. NEVERTHELESS, TERRORISTS HAVE ESCHEWED PLANTING BOMBS IN PUBLIC PLACES WHERE THEY WOULD CAUSE LARGE NUMBER OF INNOCENT CASUALTIES SINCE BOMBING IN DOWNTOWN DAMASCUS ALMOST EXACTLY ONE YEAR AGO. THUS, EVEN IF TERRORIST CELLS FAIL TO ACT DURING FAIR, THEY MAY ONLY BE BIDDING THEIR TIME.

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PAGE 03 DAMASC 03907 100831Z

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** SABOTAGE, REPORTS, POLITICAL STABILITY, ECONOMIC PROGRAMS  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 10 jul 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Unique ID:** 00  
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**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Review Release Event:** n/a  
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**SAS ID:** 2073280  
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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
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